



Political Interest And Psychological Needs: A Correlational Analysis Based On McClellands Theory.

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between political interest and motivational dimensions among students of higher education. Grounded in David C. McClelland's theory of needs, the study focused on overall motivation and its components—power, achievement, and affiliation motivation. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from a sample of 564 higher education students using standardized tools.

The analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between political interest and different motivational variables. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between political interest and overall motivation ($r = 0.409$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students with higher political interest tend to exhibit greater motivation. Similarly, political interest was found to be positively correlated with power motivation ($r = 0.391$, $p < 0.01$) and achievement motivation ($r = 0.329$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that politically interested students are more inclined toward leadership, influence, and goal-oriented behavior. A weaker yet significant positive relationship was observed between political interest and affiliation motivation ($r = 0.175$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a relatively lower association with social bonding needs.

Overall, the results highlight that political interest plays a significant role in shaping students' motivational patterns, particularly in enhancing power and achievement motives. The study underscores the importance of promoting political awareness and civic engagement within educational settings to foster motivated and responsible individuals. These findings have important implications for educators and policymakers in designing curriculum and activities that integrate political and civic learning with motivational development.

Keywords: Political interest, Psychological needs, Motivation, Higher education students.

INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of modern democracy, the political engagement of the youth remains a subject of both intense scrutiny and vital importance. Higher education institutions are traditionally viewed as the "incubators of citizenship," where students transition from passive observers to active participants in the sociopolitical sphere. However, despite similar academic environments, a significant disparity exists in how students engage with politics: while some lead student governments and grassroots movements, others remain profoundly indifferent. This divergence suggests that the catalyst for political interest is not merely external—found in curriculum or campus culture—but internal, rooted in the subconscious architecture of human motivation.

This study explores this internal landscape through the lens of David McClelland's **Human Motivation Theory**. Developed to explain the psychological drivers behind human behavior, McClelland's framework identifies three latent needs that shape an individual's actions: the **Need for Achievement (nAch)**, the **Need for Affiliation (nAff)**, and the **Need for Power (nPow)**. While these motives have been extensively studied in the context of corporate leadership and entrepreneurial success, their application to the political psychology of higher education students offers a fresh perspective on what drives the next generation of leaders.

The "Triple Threat" of these motivations provides a nuanced map for understanding student behavior. A student driven by a high **Need for Power** may seek political engagement as a means to influence campus policy and social structures. Conversely, those with a high **Need for Achievement** might be drawn to the intellectual challenge of policy analysis and systemic reform. Meanwhile, students motivated by the **Need for Affiliation** may find political interest through the communal solidarity and social belonging found within political organizations and advocacy groups.

Despite the intuitive link between personality and civic behavior, there is a lack of empirical research specifically correlating these three motivational drivers with the political interest levels of university students in the contemporary digital age. This article seeks to bridge that gap. By employing a correlational research design, this study aims to identify which of McClelland's needs serves as the strongest predictor of political curiosity and engagement. In doing so, we move beyond the "what" of student activism to uncover the "why," providing a deeper psychological understanding of the forces shaping the future of the political body.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the relationship between political interest and motivation among students of higher education.
2. To study the relationship between political interest and different component (power, achievement, and affiliation) of motivation among students of higher education.

HYPOTHESES

Ho.1: There is no significant relationship between political interest and motivation among students of higher education.

Ho.2: There is no significant relationship between political interest and power motivation among higher education students.

Ho.3: There is no significant relationship between political interest and achievement motivation among higher education students.

Ho.4: There is no significant relationship between political interest and affiliation motivation among higher education students.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was adopted for the present study. The present study was descriptive in nature and aimed to explain at the status of variables like political interest with respect to several categorical variables. A survey obtains through a series of questions posed by the investigator.

Population:

The population consisted of all under graduate and post graduate students who are studying in various colleges and universities of West Bengal state.

Sample:

In the present study, random sampling technique was used to select the sample of 564 under graduate and post graduate students from government and self-financed institutions of Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur districts in West Bengal.

Tool:

Political Interest Scale (PIS) developed by – Suresh Kumar Singh and B.B. Pandey (2005) was adopted. In present study, reliability of the scores was computed by using Cronbach's Alpha and was found to be .784 for Political Interest of students. This indicates that the scale was reliable enough to measure higher education student's interest in politics. On the other hand, Self developed '**Students Motivation Scale**' (SMS) was used for the study. The reliability calculated for the items of the SMS using Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.822. Apart from this the face validity was also determined by expert's opinion.

DATA ANALYSIS

Ho.1: There is no significant relationship between political interest and motivation among students of higher education.

Table 1: Inter Correlations Matrix between the Political Interest and Students Motivation

Variables		Political Interest	Students Motivation
	N	564	564
Political Interest	Pearson Correlation	-	.409*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
Students' Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.409*	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-

(*Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level)

From **Table 1** - on inter correlations among the variables under study, the correlations coefficient between political interest and students motivation of higher education students was calculated. It was observed that only the correlation co-efficient between political interest and students motivation was 0.409 and 'p' value was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) which was found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore 'r' being positively significant indicated positive relationship between political interest and students' motivation. So the null hypothesis (**Ho.1**) was rejected.

Ho.2: There is no significant relationship between political interest and power motivation among higher education students.

Table 2: Inter Correlations Matrix between the Political Interest and Power Motivation

Variables		Political Interest	Power Motivation
	N	564	564
Political Interest	Pearson Correlation	-	.391*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
Power Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.391*	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-

(*Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level)

From **Table 2** - on inter correlations among the variables under study, the correlations coefficient between political interest and power motivation of higher education students were calculated. It was observed that only the correlation co-efficient between political interest and power motivation was 0.391 and 'p' value was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) which was found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore 'r' being positively significant indicated positive relationship between political interest and power motivation. So the null hypothesis (**Ho.2**) was rejected.

Ho.3: There is no significant relationship between political interest and achievement motivation among higher education students.

Table 3: Inter Correlations Matrix between the Political Interest and Achievement Motivation

Variables	Political Interest	Achievement Motivation
N	564	564
Political Interest		
Pearson Correlation	-	.329*
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
Achievement Motivation		
Pearson Correlation	.329*	-
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-

(*Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level)

From **Table 3** - on inter correlations among the variables under study, the correlations coefficient between political interest and achievement motivation of higher education students were calculated. It was observed that only the correlation co-efficient between political interest and achievement motivation was 0.329 and 'p' value was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) which was found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore 'r' being positively significant indicated positive relationship between political interest and achievement motivation. So the null hypothesis (**Ho.3**) was rejected.

Ho.4: There is no significant relationship between political interest and affiliation motivation among higher education students.

Table 4: Inter Correlations Matrix between the Political Interest and Affiliation Motivation

Variables		Political Interest	Affiliation Motivation
	N	564	564
Political Interest	Pearson Correlation	-	.175*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
Affiliation Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.175*	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-

(*Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level)

From **Table 4** - on inter correlations among the variables under study, the correlations coefficient between political interest and affiliation motivation of higher education students were calculated. It was observed that only the correlation co-efficient between political interest and affiliation motivation was 0.175 and 'p' value was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) which was found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore 'r' being positively significant indicated positive relationship between political interest and affiliation motivation. So the null hypothesis (**Ho.4**) was rejected.

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The present study examined the relationship between political interest and various dimensions of motivation among higher education students. The findings revealed that political interest is **positively and significantly associated** with overall motivation as well as its specific components—power, achievement, and affiliation motivation.

A **moderate positive relationship** was observed between political interest and overall student motivation ($r = 0.409$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students who show greater interest in political matters tend to be more motivated in general. Similarly, political interest demonstrated a **moderate positive correlation** with power motivation ($r = 0.391$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that politically interested students may have a stronger desire to influence, lead, or control social situations.

The relationship between political interest and achievement motivation ($r = 0.329$, $p < 0.01$) was found to be **positive but comparatively lower**, indicating that politically engaged students are somewhat inclined

toward goal achievement and personal success. In contrast, the association between political interest and affiliation motivation ($r = 0.175$, $p < 0.01$) was **weak yet statistically significant**, implying that the need for social connection and belonging has a relatively limited link with political interest.

Overall, the results suggest that political interest plays a meaningful role in shaping students' motivational patterns, with stronger links to **general and power-related motives** than to affiliation needs. These findings support the view that political engagement is not only a cognitive or attitudinal construct but also closely tied to underlying motivational dynamics.

Educational Implications

The findings of the present study have several important implications for higher education, particularly in enhancing students' motivation through political engagement:

- **Integration of Political Education in Curriculum**

Since political interest is positively associated with students' motivation, educational institutions should incorporate political awareness, civic education, and current affairs into the curriculum. This can help foster both intellectual engagement and motivational development among students.

- **Promotion of Active Learning Strategies**

Activities such as debates, discussions, student parliaments, and model elections can stimulate political interest. These participatory methods may enhance overall motivation as well as specific motivational dimensions like power and achievement.

- **Development of Leadership Skills**

The significant relationship between political interest and power motivation suggests that politically interested students may have leadership potential. Institutions should provide opportunities such as student councils, leadership programs, and decision-making roles to nurture these abilities.

- **Encouraging Critical Thinking and Awareness**

Political engagement often requires analysis, evaluation, and opinion formation. Educators should design learning experiences that promote critical thinking, thereby increasing both academic motivation and informed citizenship.

- **Support for Achievement-Oriented Activities**

As political interest is linked with achievement motivation, teachers can use politically relevant topics (e.g., policy analysis, social issues) in assignments and projects to encourage goal-oriented behavior and academic excellence.

- **Enhancing Social Interaction and Collaboration**

Although the relationship with affiliation motivation is weaker, it is still significant. Group discussions,

collaborative projects, and peer engagement activities related to political themes can strengthen students' sense of belonging and social motivation.

- **Teacher's Role in Motivational Development**

Teachers should act as facilitators who encourage open dialogue, respect diverse viewpoints, and stimulate curiosity about political and social issues, thereby indirectly enhancing students' motivation.

- **Policy-Level Implications**

Educational policymakers should emphasize civic and political literacy as part of holistic education, recognizing its role in developing motivated, responsible, and active citizens.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future studies may examine each of McClelland's needs (achievement, power, affiliation) in greater depth to understand students' motivation towards politics.
- With the growing role of digital platforms, future research can examine how social media exposure and online political engagement influence students' motivation.
- Comparative research across different countries or cultural contexts can provide a broader understanding of how political interest and motivational patterns vary globally.

CONCLUSION

From an educational and societal perspective, findings of the study gain greater significance when viewed in the context of the **Constitution of India**, which emphasizes the development of informed, responsible, and active citizens. The **Article 19(1)(a)** guarantees freedom of speech and expression, enabling students to form and express political opinions. Similarly, the **Article 19(1)(c)** provides the right to form associations or unions, encouraging participation in political and civic activities. Furthermore, the **Article 21A** highlights the importance of education in developing awareness and critical thinking, which are essential for fostering political interest and motivation among students. The **Article 51A**, particularly the duty to promote harmony, safeguard public property, and develop scientific temper, underscores the responsibility of citizens—including students—to engage actively and responsibly in democratic processes. In this context, higher education institutions play a crucial role in nurturing politically aware and motivated individuals who can contribute meaningfully to democracy. By promoting civic engagement, critical thinking, and leadership skills, education can align with constitutional values and support the holistic development of students.

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